

News from Congressman

Chet Edwards

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Edwards: 2007 Joint Funding Resolution Increases VA Healthcare Budget By \$3.6 Billion

(WASHINGTON, DC) – U.S. Representative Chet Edwards today announced that the fiscal year 2007 Joint Funding Resolution was signed into law by the president today and includes a \$3.6 billion increase for veterans' medical care under the Department of Veterans Affairs budget, \$3.4 billion overall. As Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, Edwards fought for a significant increase in VA health care funding, despite the tight budget constraints enacted by the previous Congress.

"This increased funding level is good news for America's veterans, because it provides \$280 million dollars more a month for the VA health care system compared to the budget passed by the previous Congress. It was vitally important that this bill be sent to the president quickly, since continued funding of the VA at 2006 levels could force harmful cuts in health care services for hundreds of thousands of veterans due to health care inflation and the increasing number of veterans using the VA health care system."

Edwards emphasized that while the increase is significant, the level is consistent with the need to keep up with health care inflation and the increasing number of veterans coming into the VA health care system.

"I will never understand why the previous congressional leadership refused to pass the veterans' health care funding bill, instead allowing funding to proceed for the last four months at last year's funding levels. This bill will correct that wrong," said Edwards. "Our veterans have kept their promises to our nation, and we felt it was our duty to keep our promises to them."

The following are notable totals for VA and military construction programs:

Department of Veterans Affairs

- **Veterans Healthcare:** \$32.3 billion, an increase of \$3.6 billion above the fiscal year 2006 funding level to provide service for an anticipated increase of at least 325,000 patients and to meet rising healthcare costs.
- VA discretionary total is \$36.5 billion, an increase of \$3.4 billion above fiscal year 2006 funding level.
- Fully funded pay raises (other agencies only receive 50% of pay raise)

Military Construction

- \$6.2 billion for military construction
- \$4 billion for family housing program
- U.S. Army would receive \$250 million more than fiscal year 2006 level.
- BRAC accounts will receive a \$1 billion increase above the fiscal year 2006 level, for a total of \$2.5 billion.

“While this bill did not fully fund the BRAC accounts for 2007, Congress will have the opportunity to address the rest of the funding requirements in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2007 Supplemental, which should be passed in the spring,” said Edwards.

The House passed the bill Jan. 31 and the Senate Feb. 14th. The president signed the bill today.

Edwards is the Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee.